MST MS1 / MET P5 Examination Questions 2007 – 2008
Human Resources
CRIB

QUESTION 1: Dr Jonathan Trevor

Theme: *Substantive and formal rationality*

Question

1. *Why do formal bureaucratic organizations often seem to fail to live up to the 'ideal type' envisaged by Weber?*

Crib: In his classic treatise, Weber asserts some key principles common to all ideal-type bureaucracies – specialization of functions, hierarchies of authority, systems of rules and impersonality, most notably. Central to the notion of the ideal type bureaucracy is rationality. Ideal-type bureaucracies are both in purpose, substantively, and in the means by which those ends are achieved, formatively, rational. A number of detractors, often collectively termed 'bureaucratic dysfunctionalists', cite numerous instances, both conceptual and practical, where organizations fail to conform to the 'ideal type' envisaged by Weber. A good answer will discuss and analyse the dysfunctionalist argument and, using examples, discuss further the implications for both the theory and practice of work organizations.

QUESTION 2: Dr Jonathan Trevor

Theme: *Leadership traits, styles and roles*

Question:

2. *Leaders have "more in common with artists, scientists and other creative thinkers than they do with managers" (Zaleznik 1977). Critically examine this statement with reference to theories of leadership and highlight the implications for contemporary work organizations.*

Crib: Meaningfully differentiating between the nature of the role, contribution and value of leaders *and* managers within work organizations is a perennial source of tension within organizational behaviour literature. A good answer will make reference to developments within theories of leadership – in particular the strengths and weaknesses of various theories such as leadership traits, roles, skills and, finally, styles. It will also make reference to the different types of power common and unique to both, using examples, and with attention paid to the implications for leaders, managers, the led and the managed.

QUESTION 3: Dr Jonathan Trevor

Theme: *Post-bureaucratic organizations*

Question:

3. *The future of work is post-bureaucratic. Discuss.*

Crib: A post-bureaucratic organizations (PBO) can be differentiated from a traditional bureaucratic organization by the emphasis placed on values, the informal organization, flexibility and flexible work, flat hierarchies of authority, high trust relationships, free flows of information, fewer rules and the importance attached to creativity and employee autonomy, to name a few. A good answer

will explain and discuss the emergence and relevance of PBOs in relation to developments to work organizations, with limited reference to problems associated with traditional rational-legal bureaucratic work organizations. It will discuss further whether the PBO is *in reality* a distinctive break from the past, and represents therefore a viable organizational model for the future and, using examples and scenarios, the benefits and advantages of the PBO for both performance *and* employees.

QUESTION 4: Dr Jonathan Trevor

Theme: *Choice, contingency and organizational structures*

Question:

4. *To what extent do managers exercise choice over the structure of work organizations?*

Crib: The structure of an organization is, theory holds, contingent upon a range of *deterministic* contextual influences, including size, technology and environment - both internal and external. In a more *voluntaristic* vein, developments in strategic management also assert that business strategy, itself a product of managerial choice, is a 'first order' determinant influencing the shape and composition of work organizations. Thus, the structures of work organizations are informed by various factors both deterministic and voluntaristic, but the balance between the two may vary between organizations in response to a number of intervening variables such as managerial capability, information or historical precedent. A good answer will discuss the tensions highlighted above and cite examples in support of an overall argument with reference to implications for both theory and practice.

Question 5: Mr Michael Cunningham

If managed well, to what extent does Human Resource Management (HRM) have the potential to satisfy the legitimate aspirations of employees in terms of their economic, social, psychological and political objectives?

Crib:
>   Statement on essence of HRM (corporate, unitary, expert, capitalist etc)
>   and its impact on traditional models of organisation, reward, evaluation
>   and motivation in the following aspects:
>   - economic: individualism, appraisal, reward, progression etc;
>   - social: corporate focus, cultural interventions, teamwork, decision-making;
>   - psychological: identification, commitment, training, trust;
>   - political: strategic focus, employee information and participation.
>
>   Need to integrate all four types of aspirations in a coherent model and
>   practice.

Question 6: Mr Michael Cunningham

Describe the main features of the employment system of an overseas country of your choice, and critically assess the extent of the transferability of such features to Britain by an incoming firm from that country.

Crib:

Exposition of the system of employment relations prevailing in the overseas country:
- employment relations culture;
- penetration and coverage of collective bargaining (if any);
- system(s) for setting terms and conditions of employment used in the absence of collective bargaining;
- recruitment and retention practices;
- training opportunities;
- other career development structures.

Employment legislation relating to:
- terms and conditions of employment;
- statutory rights;
- anti-discrimination.

Other relevant legislation:
- company structure (e.g. ownership).

Established traditions/practices:
- carrying out specific jobs;
- training opportunities;
- career development.

HRM issues (?)

Exposition, where relevant, of the system of employment relations prevailing in Britain (details as for the overseas country above)

General and specific analysis of the elements to be transferred and of those not to be transferred, and how and why.

Question 7: Mr Michael Cunningham

Examine the ways in which new technologies have advanced and/or hindered the work aspirations of young people leaving full-time education with poor examination results.

Crib:

Indication of what the candidate understands by 'poor examination results'

Exposition of which 'work aspirations'.

Exposition of which 'new technologies'.

A definition of 'employability'.

Only 'young people'.

'Advanced and/or hindered', so essays may focus on 'advanced' or 'hindered' or both.

<u>How</u> have the technologies advanced/hindered work aspirations (<u>not</u> one-model-fits-all)?
- Types of employment sought/found.
- Training (including functional literacy) issues.
- Gender differences.
- Portfolios of jobs rather than F/T employment.

Question 8: Mr Michael Cunningham

Compare and contrast the ways in which employment practice has evolved in both developing and developed economies in response to globalisation, and identify how different categories of worker have been winners or losers.

Crib:

Dimensions of globalisation (economic, political, social, political, aesthetic)

Main impacts on developed countries:
- job losses, job changes for remaining staff, pressures on wages, training/promotion/appraisal/career changes for managers, need for cultural awareness and capability, cross-cultural adaptation etc

Main impacts in developing countries:
- introduction of foreign business models, values and standards;
- creation of new employment categories and systems, destruction of traditional industries employment and labour markets and skills;
- changes to religious, family, gender, age and educational structures;
- challenges to authority, reward and social status systems;
- cultural effects such as life styles, relocation and aesthetics

Need to reconcile corporate modifications with individual and social change.